DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 161 112 95 EA 010 368

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TITLE The Management Team. ERIC/CEM Research Analysis Series, Number 43.
INSTITUTION Oregon Univ., Eugene. ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 78
CONTRACT 400-78-0007
NOTE 40p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403 (free)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication (Thought Transfer); Decision Making; Elementary Secondary Education; Models; Principals; School Superintendents; *Team Administration
IDENTIFIERS California (San Leandro); California (Whittier); Massachusetts (Attleboro)

ABSTRACT

The success of the management team is determined by how well planners can create self-renewing efficient management teams through which communication can easily flow. Much too depends on the leadership abilities of superintendents. Management teams are purported to increase administrator satisfaction because of increased opportunity for decision-making. The management team is an organized deliberative body that includes the superintendent, superintendent's assistants, principals, and curriculum advisors. The team may take many different forms, but minimal requirements are legally constituted power and representatives from all the district's important systems. The most controversial problem surrounding the management team is whether to include principals. Some see the team as a means of forestalling principal unionization while others believe that teams and principal unionization are not incompatible. The team must define as clearly as possible its relation to the superintendent. The two most pressing problems with the management team are that its joint problem-solving may be time-consuming and that its communication may become fragmented. Good examples of the management team are found in Attleboro (Massachusetts), San Leandro (California), and Whittier (California). (Author/JM)

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The Management Team

by

Norman Hale

1978

ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

EA 010 368

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ERIC/CEM Research Analysis Series, Number 43
Clearinghouse Accession Number: EA 010 368

The material in this publication was prepared pursuant to a contract with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to the Center for Educational Policy and Management for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either the Center for Educational Policy and Management or the National Institute of Education.

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Teamwork and Democratic Traditions

One of America's strongest popular ideals concerns the value of teamwork. American history tells of groups of people working together to raise barns and houses, defend wagon trains, harvest crops, and form revolutionary militia. Deeply engrained in the American psyche is the notion that people are more efficient and cooperative when working in groups that recognize the worth of each individual. In a group, responsibility and expertise are shared by all, in the finest sense of democratic traditions.

Despite this traditional image, the idea of managing work by teams has found surprisingly little acceptance in the modern world. As Wynn points out, "We do not find much precedent for the administrative team in public or private enterprise." Instead, for the past one hundred years education and industry have chosen hierarchical models of organization.

The hierarchical organization, unlike the team, is organized vertically as a pyramid with the powers for decision-making invested in persons at the top of the pyramid. In this kind of organization, policy flows from the top to the bottom, and there is an inevitable distance between the problem and the decision that resolves it. This isolation of functions is only one of the negative characteristics of the hierarchy. Other negative characteristics, as Erickson and Rose note, are autocratic decision-making, adversary nego-

tiations, and a pessimistic view of the worker as someone to be "engineered."

Much current management theory regards the hierarchical structure as old-fashioned. The single strong manager acting alone has given way to groups of people operating as teams. The members of these teams serve by virtue of their proximity to problems that need resolution. They are not merely policy-makers but people who bring special skills and resources to the problems at hand.

Benefits of Team Management

The team's appeal lies in more than a vague sense of democratic principles and an intuitive regard for employee involvement as a good thing. There are some very specific advantages that proponents of team management point to.

Employee Satisfaction

The first of these is increased worker satisfaction. A worker who is actively involved in making decisions that affect his or her own work will be motivated to be more efficient and creative.

Some evidence of the relationship between employee productivity and involvement in decision-making is found in the world of business. An article in *Newsweek* magazine (July 8, 1974, reprinted in Schmuck and others) reports on a study by two Stanford Business School professors who sought an explanation for the difference in productivity between Japanese and American manufacturing plants. For example, an American semiconductor firm owns two identical plants, one in Dallas and one in Japan, but the one in Japan outproduces its American counterpart by 15 percent. If the difference

is caused simply by Japanese workers being more industrious, the researchers could not understand why a Sony television-assembly plant in San Diego is just as productive as an identical Sony operation in Tokyo.

The researchers concluded that "the difference between the American workers in San Diego and in the Dallas semiconductor plant is that Sony employees work under Japanese managers. . . . What the Japanese have that Americans by and large don't is a finely cultivated sense of the importance of looking at the corporation as a social organization, not simply as a profit-oriented enterprise. This perspective has led to a system of management techniques that Westerners may find strange but one that has made Japanese productivity the envy of the world."

Three such techniques stand out. "For one thing the Japanese conceive of management as a process in which the most important information flows from the bottom up, rather than the top down. Japanese managers expect change and initiative to come from those closest to the problem." Second is the Japanese style of decision-making. "It involves a lengthy process of achieving consensus, and it often takes days or weeks to arrive at a decision that an American manager might make by himself in minutes. But in the process, practically everyone who will be affected by the decision is consulted. Thus, notes trade official Masahiro Soejima, 'when Japanese businessmen finally do reach a decision, they are ready to act with great speed.' No time need be wasted trying to convince colleagues that the decision is correct, since they helped make it."

Finally, "the most telling aspect of Japanese management is its concern for workers as individuals." Through such means as

halting work after a period of successful operations so that everyone, including top management, can celebrate with food and drink, holding monthly birthday parties at which the manager personally presents gifts, and making a practice of knowing the names of as many subordinates as possible, Japanese managers show that they care about the individual. *Newsweek* reports that the Japanese managerial style works so well that several American corporations, including Eastman Kodak, IBM, and NCR, have adopted similar approaches.

The contrast between the Japanese method and the traditional hierarchical model of management organizations is readily apparent. As Sharpe points out, hierarchical organizations are characterized by one-way communication, overt supervision of employees, isolation, impersonal relationships, and an abundance of rules and regulations. These factors can be correlated with slower intellectual development, the necessity to flatter superiors, and a decreased ability to recognize good ideas on the part of employees.

Further evidence of the relationship between participation in decision-making and job satisfaction is provided in a 1972 survey by Belasco and Alutto of two school districts in which it was found that the "decisional climate is a major factor influencing teacher satisfaction levels." Belasco and Alutto report that "those teachers with lower satisfaction levels (e.g., those who are most willing to consider leaving their current employment) also possess the highest level of decisional deprivation." But the survey also reveals that not *all* teachers are eager to become more involved in decision-making. Some felt that they were already more involved than they

liked to be. It seems clear that programs to involve workers need to be aimed specifically to reach those who feel they are decisionally deprived.

It should be noted that these and other studies identified in this chapter do not deal directly with team management. Presumably, however, because team management incorporates principles similar to those identified in the studies, similar effects will likely ensue among members of the management team once it is implemented.

Decision Quality

A second advantage to be derived from the management team concerns the quality of the decisions the team makes. Schmuck (1974) believes that "by pooling diverse information from a variety of organizational vantage points . . . action-planning can increase in its rationality and effectiveness." The greater the amount of input from the affected parties, the more likely will a final decision reflect the actual needs of the organization. A decision reached as the result of a group deliberation and consensus is also more likely to be fully implemented since each team member will feel an "increased sense of psychological ownership in relation to managerial actions."

To test the hypothesis that decisions made by a group will be better than those made by a single individual acting alone, Piper asked several individuals to rank items in a logical series by using their own best judgment. Then he divided his subjects into small groups according to two models. In the first model, the group was asked to rank the items again by group consensus; that is, each member of the group had to agree on a final ranking. In the second

model, a team leader was appointed. This leader was required only to consult with the group, the final ranking being the leader's personal decision. To allow for improvement that might come from simply repeating the exercise, Piper assigned several people to a control group who ranked the items a second time individually.

When comparing the group rankings with the individual rankings, Piper discovered several things. First, "decisions made by group discussion and agreement (consensus) are more correct than decisions made by the same individuals acting alone." Second, decisions rendered by either group are "not only better than the initial judgment of the decisionmaker but are also frequently more correct than the decision of *any* of the members of the group--a phenomenon which may be called 'synergy'." It is this ability to outperform individual decision-making that makes the management team so attractive as an administrative tool.

Locus of Responsibility

A third advantage is that the management team, when implemented correctly, defines its own parameters of action. Because the philosophy of the team is the involvement of affected personnel, the process of recognizing a problem is simultaneously the process of recognizing the people who will solve it. The team philosophy attempts to keep policy-making at the lowest administrative level with the involvement of a minimum of personnel.

Application to Education

The management team in education is a fairly recent concept,

sparked by an interest in more efficient management procedures. It is also a response to the complexity of modern school districts. Today's school district is a large and diversified administrative organization, offering, as Fensch and Wilson point out, a mix of "psychological services, medical attention, guidance assistance, special classes for the various types of handicapped children, clean and well-maintained buildings, recreational opportunities," and much more. No longer is the school district composed of a superintendent and a few assistants, but rather consists of a corps of professional specialists. The hierarchical style of management can no longer guarantee sufficient wisdom at the top of the pyramid to cope with every problem that emerges.

Generally, when we speak of a management team we are referring to an organized deliberative body that includes the superintendent, assistants to the superintendent, principals, and curriculum advisors. But the specific composition of the team and the specific definition of its duties may vary greatly from district to district.

The Team More Fully Defined

The leap from theory to practice takes many different forms. It is important to consider the management team as a philosophy of management rather than a blueprint for implementation. One thing the literature on teams reveals is the tremendous variety of design. Some districts have one large team. Others have a series of teams in different areas that interlock on the occasions when it is necessary to work together. A district might choose to combine a standing team with ad hoc advisory task forces.

Whatever form the team takes, in a district characterized by the spirit of the management team, organizational charts will always be regarded as informal and tentative (Erickson and Rose). Good management teams will be flexible enough and varied enough to adapt to a world of changing needs. Still, there are some common characteristics that are helpful in working toward a definition and an understanding of the management team.

Minimum Legal and Structural Requirements

Not everything that resembles a team truly *is* one. The term is often used loosely as a metaphor, as Wynn notes, to "stiffen the spine of middle management in times of crisis." Many principals and personnel feel that too often the challenge to play as a team member occurs only after district policy has been formed. In some cases

the principle of the team is used as camouflage by superintendents or their deputies to gain a maximum of loyalty with a minimum of shared power. For whichever of these reasons, half of the Canadian and American principals in a recent survey in districts with administrative teams felt that their team existed in name only.

Whereas some crippling of the team is willful, just as often it is unintentional. An example of good intentions coupled with poor implementation is a case in Michigan cited by Boles. Boles and his investigators found that in one school district that thought it had an operative team, administrators were deficient in the basic communication skills required for effective teamwork. Agenda items were not thoroughly screened, and the team was disorganized and inefficient--hardly a viable team.

To test a team's legitimacy, several criteria can be applied. These criteria include the team's legal status, its membership, its decision-making procedures, and its capacity for change.

Recognition

The team will have "de jure" recognition. This recognition gives the team a status under law and is often constituted by a formal agreement between the board of education, central office personnel, the superintendent, and principal groups. McNally sees the goal of such a statement to make sure that the "role and responsibilities of the team in the school system decision making are clearly spelled out." He warns that the management team is not an informal discussion session, but a group of officials with legally constituted power. In its publication *Management Crisis: A Solution*, the

National Association of Secondary School Principals also urges such a legal definition of powers.

It is conceivable that school districts might oppose the agreement on the grounds of legalism. But in the case of the badly splintered Philadelphia school system, McGinley and Rafferty point out that if there was a "single element" to which the success of the management team could be attributed, it was the "written agreement and all that it entails."

Membership

The management team will include representatives from all the district's important systems. The representation must be broad enough to include all systems, but still restricted enough to operate efficiently and to allow all views to be heard. Depending on the size of the district and the type of the team, membership will generally include the superintendent, his assistant, the superintendent of instruction, the personnel director, the business manager, and principals, assistant principals, or their representative. Schmuck (1974) believes the ideal team contains about fourteen members. At least one team in California has over forty members.

The single most controversial topic concerning membership is the proper status of principals. For Fensch and Wilson, the "superintendency team" does not include principals. Likewise, the Association of California School Administrators' report, *Profiles of the Administrative Team*, does not make mention of principals. The proper role of principals has become perhaps the single most pressing management issue in school districts. Principals, charging that

their voices have not been heard in the formulation of school policies, have begun to organize into professional bargaining units. The level of their discontent is revealed in a recent survey: 86 percent of the principals responding were in favor of laws that would "mandate school boards to bargain formally with principals" (for results of this survey, see the *American School Board Journal* articles entitled "The Brewing . . ." and "It's Late . . ."). In the ten largest American cities, principals and/or administrators have already formed bargaining units. Only by this method do many principals feel they can gain a voice in the formal decision-making process.

The management team, in many instances, is a response to the problems of principals. Classed as "middle management," principals have not been able to clearly define their role. While Coccia defines the principal as the "master teacher," Barea argues that the principal's tasks are "clearly managerial." The management team would seem to mean the involvement of principals in a direct fashion in policy deliberations, thus making them management.

For some see the management team as simply a means of forestalling further unionization. Salmon argues that principals are too integral to the management structure to form their own bargaining units. He favors a stronger meet-and-confer system and a "management manifesto" that legitimizes the team and defines its functions. Recently, the *American School Board Journal* ("It's Late . . .") equated the movement toward "formal unionism" with "weakening, if not destroying, the concept of the school management team."

Whether unionized or not, principals belong on the management

team. Because they are on the "firing line" of social change, as Redfern describes it, they are the persons most aware of problems to be dealt with and most aware of possible solutions. To refuse the principals' expertise is to waste valuable resources. Redfern, McNally, Haines, and other writers would agree with Wynn, who concludes: "It is inconceivable that principals, who occupy such important positions, would be excluded entirely from the administrative team." One note of dissent comes from Cross, who argues that the management team is an oppressive centralized structure and that decentralization is preferable because it "places the principal in a more demanding and more professional role."

Several observers (including Coelho, McGinley and Rafferty, and McNally) do not believe the membership of principals in a bargaining unit precludes their valuable help on the management team. The true team will include principals or their representatives on the highest level of decision-making.

Decision-Making Procedures

It is not reasonable to assume that the management team will involve itself in every district problem. Too many conditions preclude total involvement. Some problems, as Wynn suggests, are of a technical nature and should be delegated to the person with the greatest expertise. Or in cases that might involve litigation, the decision must be made by one person since legal responsibility is not generally divisible.

Even when the management team *is* involved in the decision-making process, its deliberations do not always have to be considered binding. On occasion the team may act only in an advisory or resource

capacity, with the superintendent retaining the final decision-making authority. The model suggested by Frucci and the San Leandro model discussed in Erickson and Rose allow for different team roles that are specified before the decision process begins. In any case, the team will know beforehand the exact status of its deliberations.

How is the practice of participative decision-making actually integrated into the team's deliberative process? For Schmuck (1972), consensual decision-making means finding a creative compromise between minority and majority positions as defined by a survey of participants. If no consensus can be reached, the group resorts to voting. Schmuck recommends that more than a simple majority be required when the lives or jobs of many participants are affected.

The relative effectiveness of three different types of decision-making groups--consensus, majority vote, and centralist (leader dominated)--has been studied by Lowell. In particular he examined the effect these three decision-making processes have on members' attitudes about the process itself, their willingness to alter their own initial private opinions, and their satisfaction with the group solution. Lowell's findings show that two types of groups--consensus and centralist--worked very well and with good results. Members of both kinds of groups had positive attitudes toward the decision-making process followed by their groups, were quite willing to change their opinions in the course of reaching a decision, and were satisfied with the groups' solution.

Surprised by the performance of the centralist groups, Lowell attributed their success to the fact that the leaders chose to share their power with the group. Although the leaders had "complete

responsibility and authority to reach a decision" when they wished, they actually worked collaboratively by listening to a variety of ideas and opinions and "synthesizing them into a solution that requires at the most an informal approval from the group." In practice, therefore, the centralist groups worked very much like consensus groups.

The majority-vote groups, by comparison, performed far less successfully. Members of these groups were less favorable toward the decision-making process, less willing to change their initial opinions, and less satisfied with the solutions the group reached than were members of other groups. Lowell's research suggests that one great flaw with decisions made by majority-rule groups is that they are not comprehensive; the groups tended to reach decisions quickly, without considering all aspects of the problem. Also, the atmosphere in these groups became competitive, lacking a spirit of give and take. Group leaders often had to act as arbitrators between members advocating different solutions.

Surprisingly, of the three kinds of groups, the centralist group provided the "highest mean score on perception of freedom to participate." Lowell suggests that members of the centralist groups felt freer to participate because "they were encouraged by the centralist leader, they were not threatened that their idea would be rejected by a negative vote, and they were not formally responsible for making the decision." The right to vote on an issue does not seem to be inevitably linked to participant satisfaction. The best decision-making procedure (both in terms of comprehensive solutions and participant satisfaction) may be one in which members are used

as "information resources to enrich the group solution."

It is not conceivable that every decision will please every team member. As far as Schmuck (1972) is concerned, consensual decision-making does not necessarily mean that everyone enthusiastically supports a decision. Rather, it means that

> (a) everyone can paraphrase the issue to show that he or she understands it, (b) everyone has a chance to describe his or her feelings about the issue, and (c) those who continue to disagree or to have doubts will nevertheless say publicly that they are willing to give the decision an experimental try for a prescribed period of time. Consensus is a condition in which every member is willing to go along without sabotaging the decision.

Finally, the management team will define as clearly as possible its relation to the superintendent. Much of the effectiveness of teams depends on how superintendents handle disagreements between themselves and team members. As Erickson and Rose point out, there are several ways to handle these disagreements. On the simplest level, the superintendent can retain a veto, which, used judiciously, might not harm his or her standing with the team. Or, the superintendent might submit both his and the team's recommendations to the board for consideration. If the consensus runs strongly against the superintendent, he can submit to the team's recommendation, as seems only logical. Failing these, the superintendent can appoint an outside task force or hire a management consultant for the problem. Whichever of these options is chosen, the team must be fully aware in each case whether its decisions are consultative or binding.

Provisions for Performance Assessment and Change

As mentioned earlier, interest in the management team stems in part from interest in scientific management and public demands for accountability. True team administration allows for the team members to measure one another's performance. As Oswalt notes (in Beaubier and Thayer's monograph), each individual in an organization is entitled to "frequent and objective assessments of the degree to which he is achieving the results for which he is responsible and accountable."

Evaluations promote the growth of the administrator and should "be a tool for the improvement of leadership performance" (American Association of School Administrators). While evaluation is important in any organizational structure, it is doubly important in this case because participative decision-making requires such a variety of skills that team members need to be able to evaluate themselves and others to see if they are performing adequately.

In addition to performance assessment, the team model must provide some way of incorporating change into the structure. Provision for changing any of the operating procedures must be integrated into the regular workings of the team. The team must be flexible enough to respond to the myriad unusual problems of the school district.

Some Team Models

What operational forms might the management team take? Aukee, Beckwith, and Buttenmiller's study of the management teams in Detroit area schools provides a guide to four basic models: the "single," "dual," "multiple," and "divisional."

In the "single" model, generally found in smaller districts, the superintendent meets with just "one group that includes all the management team members or their representatives." In the "dual" model, the superintendent meets with "a group that includes all the management team members or their representatives" as well as a group that includes only "central administrators." In the "multiple" model, the superintendent meets with the entire management team and with "one or more other groups that include different segments of the management team." In the "divisional" model, the superintendent does not meet with the entire management team, but meets with "one or more groups that include different segments of the management team." It was found that smaller districts generally employed the "single" model while larger districts preferred the "dual" or "multiple" model.

Concerning these patterns of organization, the authors derive several conclusions. First, they discovered that models that provided a districtwide team were preferable to models that did not. "The divisional team pattern, which makes no provision for management team involvement in system-wide problem solving, was found to be the least satisfactory of the four team patterns." Second, of the other three plans of organization, the "dual" pattern "clearly falls behind the single and multiple patterns in terms of management team effectiveness." In a "dual" system, members of the at-large management team tend to feel that the "real" decisions are made by the superintendent and his cabinet during their own meetings. In general, an "appraisal of the findings suggests that the single pattern of team management . . . and the multiple pattern . . . which

provides a formal structure for the team handling of both the district-wide problems and the specialized concerns of its members come closest to facilitating the implementation of the management team concept."

In their monograph on teams, Erickson and Gmelch recognize three types. Their "conventional" team corresponds roughly to the "single" team mentioned above. The "crossbred" or "leadership" team is still a "single" team except that it is "more broadly representative of an entire organization" and includes members of the teaching team, the instructional support team, the community team, and so forth. The "cocoon" team is similar to the "multiple" team except that the smaller investigating and recommending team exists on an ad hoc basis and is dissolved when its function is fulfilled.

The Psychological Environment

The management team should be characterized minimally by the structural and legal guidelines above. In addition to these, other less tangible conditions should also be present. Wynn believes the district must possess a basic belief in democracy; a trust in people; an adequate and competent administrative staff; a congruence of authority, responsibility, and accountability; the refinement of group process skills; the acceptance of the team principle on school levels; and a general commitment to the philosophy of the team.

Chief among the intangibles is the character of the team leader, generally the superintendent. The openness of the team's decision-making depends on his skills and his ability to inspire others to work toward common goals. The superintendent must be

willing to allow members of the team to fully and completely disagree without fear of falling into disfavor. Schmuck (1972) believes that "the behavior required is that of empathic understanding and confrontation." The leader must not be afraid to tell his team where he stands in "terms of his hopes, aspirations, and goals." Yet, he should not promote discussion of a topic in the hopes that "the group will eventually agree with the leader's position."

In addition, the leader must be an experimenter in skills. He will practice paraphrase, perception-checking, description of feelings, and other techniques for increasing the flow of communication. The team leader must walk a fine line between motivating others and dominating the meeting to his own ends. Schmuck and other writers recommend that the superintendent allow the chairmanship of the team to rotate for every meeting.

McNally sums up the role the superintendent must play. The superintendent must show the team by his attitude "that he truly values their participation; that their inputs significantly affect decisions on school system goals, policies, and procedures; and that the superintendent and board . . . are truly respectful of their status and authority."

Potential Problems

Wynn argues that the management team is not necessarily compatible with the philosophy of every school district. It will be especially appropriate in districts that see themselves as service organizations and that interact extensively with the public and other community agencies. But even in these cases, the concept of the administrative team contains severe liabilities.

Counting the Costs

Consensual decision-making requires time--lots of it. The process is cumbersome. As Salmon observes, superintendents, pressed by deadlines and circumstances, will be tempted to "make executive decisions without relying upon full team input." Obviously, short-circuiting the process in this way defeats the whole purpose of the team. Because team members must be allowed to express their views, and because that takes time, it is crucial that teams not regularly be ignored because of the necessity to render immediate decisions.

Wynn suggests that one of the greatest challenges to proper team functioning is the minimizing of extensive deliberation on trivial issues. Tying up the entire team on a problem that involves only a few members wastes time and money. To every issue that is raised must be applied the "test of domain." This test involves defining the smallest number of people necessary to make a decision.

A related problem is the tendency, especially in large dis-

tricts with several teams, for communications to become fragmented. With the rapid growth in school systems and the proliferation of administrative staff, job responsibilities become increasingly clouded. Areas of interest and domain are not easily defined. The challenge to educational managers is to provide for a maximum flow of communication throughout the organization. Schmuck recommends a number of team members in "linkpin" roles to serve as the communications link between two teams. Other possibilities for better communication are no doubt available. Several writers speak of the need for complete and accurate records of all team discussions.

Commitment to Communicate

Consensual decision-making requires possession of a wide complement of skills. Schmuck (1974) believes that the team's "communicative effectiveness" lies in such required skills as "paraphrasing, behavior description, feeling description, impression checking, taking surveys, and giving and recording feedback." Districts with successful teams have employed inservice training, management consultants, management seminars, workshops, and university courses in group dynamics to teach these skills.

Schmuck and other writers point not only to the necessity for communication skills, but the necessity for each administrator to receive feedback from others about his or her performance. A team member can improve only when he "knows where and to what degree his performance is strong or weak, is aware of what he can and should do to strengthen his performance, has the capacity and the desire to make qualitative and quantitative changes himself, and is encouraged

to pursue a planned program of improvement" (Redfern).

If what Boles discovered in one Michigan school district is at all typical, the problem of receiving and giving good feedback is enormous. In this district, Boles distributed questionnaires on which members of the team evaluated their own performance and that of every other team member. In only one case did an individual's perceptions of his own performance match the perceptions others held of his performance. Perception-checking questionnaires should probably become a regular part of the team's procedures. Schmuck (1974) recommends also that a portion of every meeting be devoted to a review of the meeting's progress and an analysis of the interaction among members.

Besides these communications skills, team members should also have another basic quality: the ability to give and receive trust. McNally believes that "trust is essential." Superintendents and their immediate staffs, principals, and supervisors "must act in ways that engender trust in each other." The adjectives "vulnerable," "open," and "trusting" are key words used to describe the ideal leader in much team literature. Sharpe catalogs the benefits trust confers, and Erickson and Gmelch refer constantly to the quality. The open and trusting manager will assure his colleagues that the full expression of opinions and feelings is permissible without fear of retribution.

While trust seems to have been generally accepted as a prerequisite for team functioning, Belasco and Alutto claim that the importance of trust remains to be empirically proved. Job satisfaction, they found, was not related to increased trust: "The

absence of a significant relationship between trust and satisfaction may be traced to the observation that trust may not be a relevant organizational variable." They theorize that the individual might achieve high degrees of job satisfaction without needing to be trusted by all working associates.

The management team in general requires a greater investment of time, money, and effort than do other kinds of decision-making. Vital to its success are competent personnel who have been equipped with special skills that the school district is committed to teaching and revitalizing.

Three Specific Teams and How They Operate

Is it true, as Starr has charged, that the "educational administrative team has usually not developed beyond newsprint stories, celluloid overheads, or professional educational magazines"? To find out, the writer called two superintendents and one high school principal in three school districts. Each had written an article describing his experience with management teams and claimed success. What follows is an account of their experiences, derived both from their articles and personal telephone interviews.

Attleboro, Massachusetts

Nearly ten years ago the school district in Attleboro, Massachusetts, was experiencing overcrowded schools, high pupil-teacher ratios, and a low per-capita spending rate. Added to these problems, middle management and the school board were in conflict, and teachers and principals were competing against each other. Believing that consensus management could alleviate some of these problems, in 1969 Superintendent Robert Coelho and two colleagues began a needs assessment of their district. They also enrolled in classes at a nearby university to equip themselves with communications skills. As they perfected their skills, they gradually drew more of the district's administrative staff into the procedures. The district began to stress a "systems view" of management and began to adopt the

team management concept districtwide. Today, the management team reaches down to the building level.

As Coelho explained to the writer, the Attleboro district has five basic teams. The first is the Central Office Team (the superintendent, his assistants, and other central office personnel); the K-5 Team (principals); the Middle School Team; the High School Team (principals, assistant principals, and directors of occupational and academic education); the K-12 Team (every principal and every assistant principal in the system). Each Friday the Central Office Team meets with one of the other four teams. The other three teams meet with each other or by themselves, as necessary.

Each team follows the same format, and each conducts its meetings like the others. Each has a convener, a recorder, and a process observer. The positions are filled by different members at each meeting. Coelho explained that this rotation of functions prevents any single person from being seen as a permanent leader and encourages all members to actively contribute. Under this system, the superintendent convenes meetings only as often as every other member of the team.

In the Attleboro district, principals organized into their own bargaining unit ten years ago. How has this affected their relationship with the team? Coelho reports only minor tensions. He attributes some of this to the fact that the superintendent never negotiates with the principals. All bargaining is done by means of the superintendent's assistants.

This district is also an example of how community resources can be mobilized to help train team members. From the outset the

district made use of personnel from local corporations and universities to present workshops in management and interaction skills. The process of upgrading skills and training personnel is a constant one.

Coelho believes one of the drawbacks of the team system is the time decisions require. He recalls one instance when his staff had already made its decision on a testing procedure, but had to delay implementation until the principals' group came to the same conclusion. But he thinks the difficulties of the management team are offset by the more complete use of district resources.

San Leandro, California

Superintendent Edward Holden reports that the San Leandro Team is less successful at present than he would like. In the past he discerned that the team had become a "principals' club," which was seen to serve the interests of principals rather than the district's clients. Because administrators were resisting the team idea, Holden began the process of transferring secondary school principals, a project that ran into difficulty when PTA and civic groups rallied to the principals' support. Nevertheless, the transfers have just recently been completed, and Holden believes the changes will be for the best. As he explained to the writer, the district has shown that principals are not teachers but administrators whose primary loyalty must be to the central administrative unit.

The San Leandro Team is a very large one. Originally composed of twenty members, the team now has over forty, including

principals, vice-principals of the secondary schools, the superintendent's cabinet, and a representative of the classified staff. This team resembles Erickson and Gmelch's "cocoon" model. The large leadership team meets on an as-needed basis, generally operating through task forces that enlist people with special expertise in the problem areas. After investigating the problem and formulating a policy, the task force returns to the team, which can accept, modify, or reject and return the policy for more consideration. The at-large team serves as a reviewing and sanctioning body, with most of the actual policy preparation done by the small teams.

In an attempt to cast the net of participative decision-making even wider, San Leandro recently formed a special team of parents and students, which formulates its own recommendations for consideration by the at-large team.

San Leandro has made use of outside experts, Holden reports, as part of the ongoing attempt to upgrade administrator skills. He regrets that the district does not have more procedures for feedback and self-correction.

San Leandro has no principal unions. Holden sees one goal of the administrative team as that of preventing their appearance. The district, he says, is committed to the necessity of taking care of its personnel. Salaries of management people are considered by a task force selected for the occasion and composed of the superintendent's staff. This team reports directly to the school board.

Whittier, California

The management team in the Whittier Union School District and

similar building teams in Pioneer High School are examples of team administration with a strong flavor of management by objectives. In a November 1976 article in *Thrust for Educational Leadership*, Gerald Haines, principal at Pioneer High School, explains how the school board began to lay the groundwork for its consultative management system in 1973. Less than a year later the district "provided a workshop in the development of position descriptions that could bring into practice the concept of responsibilities, authorities, and standards of performance."

The practice of writing position descriptions and formulating goals, a procedure consistent with management by objectives, was followed consistently by Whittier Union during the four-year implementation period. Beginning with the school board and the district officers, the process of writing these descriptions filtered down into the local schools. By 1975 the district had completed a "system of a direct management organization from board of trustees to the classroom with coordinated goals and objectives, responsibilities, and authorities throughout the system."

This management organization included a districtwide management team composed of the superintendent, his assistant, the personnel director, and principals. Principals are encouraged to adopt the team concepts in their own buildings. Haines told the writer that, in accordance with this philosophy, his school has two teams. One consists of the principal, his assistant, the coordinator of instruction, counselors, department chairmen, and the director of activities. This body meets once a week. A second team, with a slightly different membership, meets about once a month. Haines

reports that he uses input from the two teams in preparing his decisions. He stresses that while he is free to make final dispositions, he cannot practically ignore the advice from his team.

To implement this team, Whittier Union hired consultants to aid in the training of personnel. The consultants trained one person in each skill area, and that person then trained others in turn. For example, one assistant principal who was given training in "position description" became the trainer for the rest of the team. The personnel director also provides districtwide inservice workshops.

Among the problems Haines cites, one of the most serious was the difficulty of convincing people that educational objectives could be directly specified and acted on. For this reason he urges that standards be "few in number but concentrated on the high priority items." Another problem is the tremendous investment of time to write, plan, and follow through on assessment of the standards.

Assessment in the Whittier Union District tends to be viewed more broadly than in the two preceding districts. Whittier Union pays less attention to the actual processes of team management; the need for process observers, perception clarification, and group interaction is seldom mentioned. More attention is paid to evaluating staff morale in general, student achievement, and community involvement. The idea of the team is subordinate to the principles of management by objectives.

Conclusion

While the management team is a fairly recent concept, there are enough examples of its success to predict wider application in the future. From the information available at present, several conclusions are appropriate.

First, while many teams have been formed to head off incipient supervisor unions, it is not clear that the team and these bargaining units are incompatible. Coelho and McGinley and Rafferty, in fact, believe they are perfectly compatible. Whether organized or not, principals are an integral part of the team.

Second, in many instances teachers or their representatives are not included on teams. However, if the district wishes to adopt a comprehensive management system for the entire district, the teacher population needs a regular channel to present its concerns. This might be accomplished by a building-level team such as Whittier Union, or by including a teacher representative on the single, districtwide team that includes the whole district.

Third, the management team and the concept of management by objectives are separate. They may be used in conjunction with each other, but not necessarily so.

Fourth, since the team is primarily a management device and not a purely educational innovation, its successful implementation will emanate from the superintendent and his immediate staff to the central office and from there to the schools. The logic of the

team is such that it can, and should, be implemented in all areas of the district. Central office administrators should be aware, however, that the success of the program depends on their willingness to receive training and to provide continuing training for other administrators in the system. An essential aid seems to be the use of outside observers and advisors to ensure a continuous upgrading of skills. Success, says Haines, lies in building the confidence and achievements of team members.

Finally, not enough data or case studies exist on management teams in large, urban school districts. Most of the literature concerns small or medium-sized districts. No research has been undertaken to see if the team concept is restrained by district size or complexity. It is conceivable that team management is only applicable to smaller districts.

The future of the management team will be determined by the extent to which planners can create self-renewing, efficient management structures through which communication can easily flow. The management team offers great challenges in its implementation, but the rewards are also great. Used wisely, the management team can minimize district tensions and be a device for training management personnel.

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